



Notes: A Response to Michael Owen Jones

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Notes

A Response to Michael Owen Jones

JAN HAROLD BRUNVAND

The otherwise fine article by Michael Owen Jones appearing in "The Meanings of Tradition" special issue of *Western Folklore* (Spring 2000, Vol. 59, No. 2) is marred by an inaccurate and outdated reference to my textbook *The Study of American Folklore*. Jones begins by counting 46 appearances of the word (or concept) "tradition" in the first eight pages of the book; inexplicably, he cites the second edition of 1978. His mistake is the claim that "Explanations of the concept tradition are notably missing . . . from Brunvand's book and most other texts [and] also standard references" I cannot speak for the other sources he cites, but an explanation is certainly to be found in my own book.

I explain the concept on pages 6–7 of the edition cited, starting with the paragraph that begins "Folklore is traditional in two senses . . .," and continuing with some examples of traditional aspects of both folk and popular culture. Essentially the same explanation appears on pages 8–9 of the third edition of 1986. Both editions also address the topic of traditionality as applied to folk artifacts in a paragraph appearing on page 308 (2nd. edn) and in a new chapter introducing "folklife" in the 3rd. edn. on page 409–410. But, of course, since "tradition" is a key element in any definition of folklore, the matter is repeatedly considered in many other sections of the book as well.

The best citation to my textbook, however, would have been to the fourth edition of 1998, where the "tradition" explanation appears on pages 12–13, expanded to consider the idea of "new traditions," and followed by a "focus" box (pp. 14–15) in which an example is given of someone "Creating a [New] Rite of Passage," along with three questions for class discussion on the nature of traditional events. The "folklife tradition" passage is on page 520 of this edition.

Incidentally, Jones's point about someone choosing tradition rather than following tradition could have been supported effectively by referring to Kay Cothran's excellent concise discussion of "Participation in Tradition" that originally appeared in *Keystone Folklore* in 1973. Her essay

has been easily available, along with a headnote expanding some of its points, in my own *Readings in American Folklore* (Norton, 1979, pages 444–448) which remains in print in its original paperback edition.

Salt Lake City